

LITTLEMORE ASYLUM.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE OF VISITORS

FOR

1850.

LITTLEMORE ASYLUM.

[*comprising an union of the Counties of Oxford and Berks, the City of Oxford, and the Boroughs of Abingdon and Reading, for the maintenance of their Pauper Lunatics.*]

At the Monthly Meeting of the Committee of Visitors of the PAUPER LUNATIC ASYLUM at LITTLEMORE, OXFORDSHIRE, held at the Asylum on Wednesday the 18th day of December 1850—

PRESENT

JOSEPH WARNER HENLEY Esquire, M.P.

Chairman,

HUGH HAMERSLEY Esquire, *Vice-Chairman,*

The Reverend RICHARD HARINGTON D.D.

HENRY EDWARD FRANCIS LAMBERT Esquire,

JOHN HENRY ASHHURST Esquire,

Justices

of

Oxfordshire.

Sir ROBERT GEORGE THROCKMORTON Baronet,

HENRY PHILIP POWYS Esquire,

EDMUND CURRIE Esquire,

EDWARD TULL Esquire,

The Reverend NATHANIEL DODSON,

and

Justices

of

Berkshire.

WILLIAM THORP Esquire,

A Justice of

the City

of Oxford.

The Committee agreed to the following

REPORT

to be presented respectively to the ensuing Courts of Quarter Sessions of the Counties of Oxford and Berks, to the next Meetings of the Councils of the City of Oxford and Borough of Reading, and to the ensuing Quarter Sessions of the Borough of Abingdon.

We beg to report that the Asylum has been duly visited in the course of the year as prescribed by the Rules; the Visitations consisting of the monthly Meetings of the general Committee, and intermediate Meetings of Sub-Committees,—besides occasional assemblings of the Visitors when special circumstances arose.—And we are enabled to report favorably of the management of the Institution, on the part of its several Officers and Servants.

An outlay upon the original, or Capital Account in respect of the building, furnishing, and completing the Asylum, has not ceased to be necessary until the present time, when the Account may be considered to be closed.—The most recent items of Expenditure upon this Account relate to the deepening of one of the Wells near the House,—the fixing of a new, additional Steam Boiler,—and the purchase and consecration of a Piece of Ground added to

the Littlemore Church Yard for the sepulture of Persons dying in the Asylum. The total Capital Expenditure (exclusive of the Interest paid upon the Loans,) has now been £49,593 0s. 5d.

The Water obtained from the Springs at Littlemore being very calcarious, and the supply being insufficient, we have had under consideration several Schemes both for conveying Water from a distance and for softening the local Water; and we have consulted certain scientific Persons on the subject. Hitherto however, the expense of the several measures proposed has prevented the prosecution of any one of them; and we are not without hope that the deepening of one of the Wells, and the provision recently made for retaining all the Rain or Soft Water which falls upon the various Roofs of the Buildings,—may suffice for the purposes of the Establishment.

The total number of Patients now in the Asylum is 335; (namely, 140 Males and 195 Females.)

During the present year 20 Males and 25 Females have been discharged cured, and 13 Males and 7 Females have died. The age of the oldest of the deceased Persons was 77, and the youngest 20 years; and the average age of the whole number was 46 years.

The number of Patients admitted since the commencement of the year has been 120* (of which number 58 were Males, and 62 were Females.)

Thus the Asylum is nearly full. And, circumstances having occasionally given us reason to believe that Persons not “Paupers” in the literal sense of the word have, by arrangement with the Officers of their Parish, been admitted into this Institution; and it being important to prevent this,—we desire to call the notice of the Counties to the intention of the Law as to the class of Persons who, exclusively, should be admitted; in doing which it may be useful to take a review of the Statutes which have been passed with reference to poor Lunatics:

The first legislative enactment then, providing for the custody of Lunatics, was the Vagrant Act 17th George the Second, chapter 5. This contained the only provision applicable to Pauper-Lunatics, until the 48th George the Third, chapter 96, was passed in 1808. That Statute authorized the erection of County Asylums, for the reception

* Namely—

Oxfordshire Patients	..	..	..	51
Berkshire ditto	..	..	..	49
Oxford City ditto	..	..	..	11
Abingdon ditto	..	..	..	3
Reading ditto	..	..	..	6
TOTAL,				<hr/> 120

of every Lunatic, Insane Person, or dangerous Idiot who, having become chargeable to any Parish, was brought to the Asylum upon a Warrant of two Justices granted upon the application of the Overseers of a Parish contributing to the Asylum. It was amended by the several Statutes of the 51st George the Third, chapter 79; the 55th George the Third, chapter 46; the 59th George the Third, chapter 127; and the 5th George the Fourth, chapter 71: and, in the year 1828, all these Statutes were repealed by the 9th George the Fourth, chapter 40, which consolidated the different enactments, and was intended to facilitate the erection of County Lunatic Asylums. And the Parties admissible into those Asylums were defined in these Statutes to be "Insane Persons chargeable to any Parish." And the present Act (the 8th and 9th Victoria, chapter 126) which supersedes the former Laws and leaves it no longer voluntary with the Counties or with Towns to provide Asylums for their Insane Poor,—defines (section 84) a "Pauper" to mean "every Person maintained wholly or in part by, or chargeable to any Parish."

The consequence of admitting non-Pauper Patients into a County Asylum is twofold; first, in it being unfair towards the general Rate Payers who have contributed the Capital Fund of the Asylum; and, secondly, that the class of

Persons in question might happen to be admitted to such an extent as to exclude those who are strictly entitled to Admission.

The Visitors have always been desirous of avoiding the admission into the Asylum of Criminal Lunatics; but, great difficulty being occasionally experienced by Magistrates in finding an Asylum for Insane Prisoners, we felt it to be our duty in September last to pass a Resolution “that any Prisoners in the several Prisons of the Counties and Towns in union becoming Insane, (excepting those who have been acquitted by a Jury on the ground of Insanity,) shall be admissible into this Asylum, if the Visiting Justices select it for recommendation to the Secretary of State, and an Order be obtained accordingly.”

The Statistics of the Asylum have been favorable throughout the year, and details of them will appear in the annual Report of the Superintendent to be made to the Visitors at the Meeting next month.

The weekly charge for the maintenance of the Patients was 9s. 6d. up to Midsummer last, when it was reduced to its present rate of 8s. 6d.

Frequent instances have occurred of Justices of Towns in Oxfordshire and Berkshire signing Orders for the Admission

of Patients into the Asylum, who had not jurisdiction to make the Order. And although, in fact, the Patients in these cases have, in no instance, been rejected, the Superintendent has been placed in the delicate position either of feeling obliged to refuse admission to an afflicted Person (perhaps dangerously insane,) to be taken back to his Parish,—or of receiving him or her into confinement till the imperfect authority could be cured by a legal Order being substituted.*

It will be useful therefore, to subjoin a List of the Towns whose Justices are empowered (by virtue of the Statute 8th and 9th Victoria, chapter 126, section 48, read in conjunction with the definition of “Borough” in section 84)—to order the admission of Patients into this Asylum:

They are—

Oxford City, and	}	In the County of Oxford;
Banbury Borough,		

and

Abingdon Borough,	}	In the County of Berks.†
Reading Borough,		
and		
Windsor Borough,		

* The 8th & 9th Victoria, c. 126, s. 51,—enacts that no Pauper shall be received into any Asylum without an Order and Statement, with a medical certificate, according to the form in the Schedule; and that any person receiving a Pauper without such authority shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

† The Borough of Newbury would also come within the definition, if it were in union with this Asylum.

And it may be well also to add that the Clergyman of a Parish (unless he happen to be a Magistrate) has only jurisdiction to grant an Order of Admission, when the Lunatic cannot, “on account of his health or other cause, be safely taken before a Justice;”—and either an Overseer of the Parish, or the Relieving Officer of the Union must be present at the inquiry; and the Order must shew, upon the face of it, the facts which confer the jurisdiction: as vide the Statute 8th & 9th Victoria c. 126, s. 48.

The Annual Report of the Chaplain is appended to this.

On behalf of the Committee of Visitors,

J. W. HENLEY, Chairman.

Littlemore, December 18th, 1850.

APPENDIX.

To the Committee of Visitors of the Littlemore Asylum.

GENTLEMEN,

In submitting to you my Report for the year 1850, I have few, if any, fresh facts to bring before your notice, touching the religious instruction of the Patients under my charge.

Since the commencement of the year, many Patients have been admitted and discharged, and several have died. Of those who were discharged all were in the habit of constantly attending Chapel, with the exception of M. A. H., a Berkshire Patient, who was not a Member of the Established Church. She has since been readmitted.

With respect to those who have died, several of them expressed a wish for me to pray with them, which I have always complied with, when there has appeared any probability of their being capable of attending to me.

It affords me great pleasure to be able, still, to state with confidence, that the celebration of our beautiful Church Service, in the Chapel of the Asylum, is attended with very beneficial results to a great many of the Patients.

Their orderly behaviour while in Chapel, is a most convincing proof of the soothing and tranquillizing effect which religion has on their disordered intellects. Those who can read, follow me very attentively with their Prayer Books, throughout the Prayers, Psalms &c., always reading their verse in the Psalms and repeating the Responses.

When absent one Sunday last Summer, a friend of mine, (the Rev. Joseph Bosworth, D.D.) took the duty for me, and the following is a copy of the entry which he made in my Journal. "I cannot help recording my great gratification at seeing so orderly
"a Congregation. I never preached to a more attentive audience."

Several persons who have been present during the Service in the Chapel, have expressed their delight and astonishment, that so many insane people should remain quiet for such a length of time, and appear so attentive to their religious duties.

That part of my ministerial duty which consists in delivering short addresses to the Patients, has been regularly performed, without any evil results; on the contrary, I have every reason to believe, that in many instances great comfort has been afforded the Patients through this channel. By carefully avoiding any exciting subjects and expressions, I have been enabled to preach such sermons as I should deliver to an ordinary country congregation.

The number of Patients at present in the Asylum is 335, viz:—140 Males and 195 Females; and between 70 and 80 Males and 110 and 120 Females are in the habit of attending Chapel on Sundays.

The week day Services are not attended by such large numbers; some of the female Patients being unavoidably employed in domestic work.

I still continue to have my reading classes; between 30 and 40 female and 20 and 30 male Patients joining the Sunday classes.

The Female Patients also read in the afternoons of Tuesdays and Fridays. The Lending Library is duly appreciated by the more rational of the Inmates, and the books are the means of affording much pleasure, and, I trust, instruction and benefit.

The following extract from my Journal, may not be deemed uninteresting :—

“Easter Sunday, 1850.

“Immediately after the Morning Service, I administered (privately) the Holy Communion to the following Patients :—A. B.,—S. D.,—E. B.,—A. M.,—S. G.,—H. N.,—P. P.,—A. R.,—R. H.,—M. H.,—A. S.,—E. U.,—A. W.,—G. M.,—H. P., and C. M.* I have great pleasure to report that I never saw more attentive Communicants. I had previously submitted to the Superintendent a list of the above named Patients, and none were objected to.”

50 Cases of fits have occurred in the Chapel during Divine Service in the course of the year; and 7 Patients had to be taken out being excited; but, as I have remarked in my former Reports, little or rather no disturbance is occasioned by the removal of the Patients.

The year, to the close of which we have now nearly arrived, has altogether been a satisfactory one to me;—and, although the whole of my duties have not always appeared to be attended with success, yet I have great cause to be thankful that my humble en-

* In the Journal the names appear in full.

deavours to give consolation to those who compose my afflicted charge, have on many occasions been productive of the intended effect.

I have the honor to remain,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

EDWIN W. R. PULLING,

Chaplain.

Littlemore, December 18th, 1850.

Oxfordshire Epiphany Quarter Sessions 1851. Resolved that the REPORT of the Committee of Visitors of the LITTLEMORE ASYLUM be printed and circulated.

By the Court,

J. M. DAVENPORT.

County Hall, 1st January 1851.

C. P.